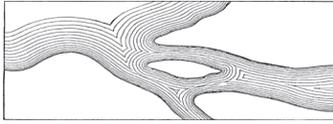


**6 Seasonal changes in water level create intermittent streams.**

An intermittent stream is one that flows only at certain times of the year.

This trench is usually dry, but offers a clue about the seasonal flow patterns of Cabin Creek.



When rainfall is scarce and discharge of groundwater that feeds the creek is reduced, the trench is empty.

During periods of melting snow, heavy rain, or increased flow from the high-elevation bog, the creek splits its course and the trench becomes a flowing stream.



**7 Where is all this water coming from?**

Three quarters of a mile from here sits a small Appalachian headwater bog – a damp, flat place where water under the surface of the earth seeps up through layers of rock and soil.

This is where Cabin Creek begins.

The water forms trickling streams that increase in size and speed. Less than mile from the source, that water is already heading down the mountain at a furious pace, as you can tell by the dramatic falls up the hill to your right.



*Sphagnum mosses are abundant in the highly acidic soils of seepage wetlands*

**8 This whole forest was recently bare.**

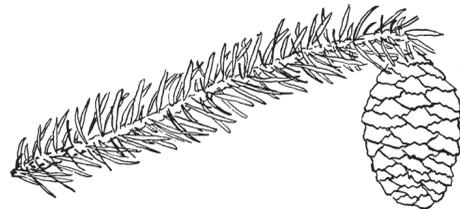
This gradual slope leading back to Massie Gap served as a railroad bed between 1910 and 1922, when the Fairwood Lumber Company hauled trees out of this area.



After the forest was cleared, the thick layer of humus (broken down organic matter) dried out and caught fire easily. Some devastating fires were started by sparks from the wood-burning engines of logging trains.

The young hardwood forest you see today is in the process of regeneration.

**We hope you've enjoyed your hike.**



**If you choose not to keep this booklet, please return it to the box at the trailhead to conserve paper.**

**Credits:**

Brochure developed by Kelly Servick, Americorp Volunteer Interpreter 2011

Rhododendron, Mountain laurel and Blueberry: USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / Britton, N.L., and A. Brown. 1913. An illustrated flora of the northern United States, Canada and the British Possessions. 3 vols. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. Vol. 2: 681, 684, 700

Big-tooth aspen: Susan Mcougall @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database

Brook trout: Duane Raver, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Sphagnum Moss:

Michael Lüth @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / Lüth, M. 2004. Pictures of bryophytes from Europe [CD-ROM]. Published by the author.

**Grayson Highlands State Park**



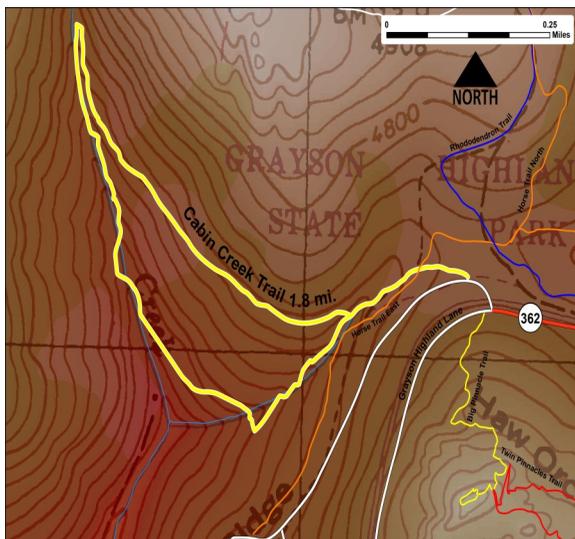
**Cabin Creek Trail Self-Guided Hike**



**Grayson Highlands State Park**  
829 Grayson Highland Ln.  
Mouth of Wilson, VA 24363  
Phone 276-579-7092  
graysonhighlands@dcr.virginia.gov



# Welcome to the Cabin Creek Trail



This 1.9-mile loop will lead you through a northern hardwood forest, across several small streams and down to the creek bed. The 25-foot twin falls of Cabin Creek are one of the park's most spectacular features. The second half of the loop is a gradual slope leading back to Massie Gap.

The numbered stops in this guide correspond to the numbered posts along the trail. They describe unique natural features and points of historical interest.

Please follow the "leave no trace" ethic when enjoying this trail and leave the plants and animals you encounter undisturbed.

Enjoy!

## 1 These evergreen shrubs are unique to high elevations.

The bushes surrounding you are all members of the heath family and are common in the understory of northern hardwood forests. In areas of disturbance like this, where most of the trees were logged, the shrubs may take advantage of the opening to form "slicks" or "hells." These dark tunnels of vegetation are important in controlling erosion and sheltering wildlife.

**Rosebay rhododendron or Great rhododendron** produces pinkish-white flowers in late June and early July.



**Mountain laurel** is poisonous to grazing animals but was used by Native Americans as an anti-inflammatory and poison ivy remedy.



**Highbush blueberries** ripen in late August and are an important food source for songbirds, turkeys, black bears, rabbits and squirrels.



## 3 Aspens are a rarity in Virginia

In the Northeastern US and Canada, especially the Great Lakes region, aspens dominate the forests and form large stands.

Here in Southwest Virginia, big-tooth aspens like the one you can see on the right side of the trail are very uncommon.



Big-tooth aspens are extremely intolerant of shade and rarely thrive where other hardwoods are dominant. In the fall, the leaves of the big-tooth aspen turn a brilliant shade of yellow.

## 2 Many Appalachian families lived and hunted on this land.

The Massey family – Lee, Laura, and their five children – lived here in the late 1800s and early 1900s, raising lambs and gathering herbs and abundant American Chestnuts to sell to their neighbors. Lee Massey was also employed by the Fairwood Lumber Company, where he helped build the railroad that hauled timber from what was once a virgin forest.

Just off the trail to your right is the mountain spring that supplied Lee Massey and his family with water.

Heading up the hill to your right would have led you to Lee Massey's cabin.

Down the hill and across the creek are the remains of an old shanty where Cicero Osborne, descendant of some of the first settlers in this area, hunted and grazed sheep.



One of the historic cabins in the picnic area field

## 4 Native brook trout are evidence of a pristine waterway.

The northern variety of brook trout native to this stream are very sensitive to pollution and need specific water conditions to survive:



- pH level measures the acidity of the water, ranging from 0 (very acidic) to 14 (very basic). Brook trout require a pH of 5 or higher.
- Dissolved oxygen measures concentration of oxygen molecules dissolved in water. Brook trout need highly oxygenated streams.
- Temperature variation affects brook trout much more than rainbow or brown trout. They require water that is 68° or cooler.

This creek is not stocked, and the trout present an exciting challenge for avid fishers. Special regulations require artificial lures, single hook only and a 9-inch minimum.

## 5 This 25-foot cascade is one of many along the creek's path down the mountain.

Falls like these are part of what makes the water in Cabin Creek suitable for brook trout. The splashing, crashing, and rippling of water increases its dissolved oxygen level, and shaded areas help keep the temperature low.



From here, water flows west along Highway 58 West from the park, where it is visible along the road before joining with Helton Creek. It then crosses the border into North Carolina to pour into the North Fork of the New River.